

Lieutenant Governor Garamendi Says Voice of the Delta Must Be Heard in Water Negotiations



SACRAMENTO - Lieutenant Governor John Garamendi, a 32-year Delta resident and former Deputy Interior Secretary in the Clinton Administration, gave the following statement at today's Delta Water Policy press conference and rally at the Capitol:

"The Delta is my home. For 32 years Patti and I have had the privilege of living and farming in the Delta. This is where we raised our children and where we enjoy the incredible beauty and diversity of nature. This is where we gossip with farmers over a cup of coffee at the local café.

We have fought floods in 1986 and droughts in between. When we moved to Walnut Grove 32 years ago the river was full of fishing boats alternating between the salmon runs and the striped bass runs. It was once a rich aquatic habitat. It still is the largest and most important estuary on the West Coast of the Western Hemisphere; today it is a very sick estuary.

I have watched the decline over the years. The fishing boats are mostly gone. The great thirst of

a growing state population, industry and agricultural enterprises have drained the life out of our Delta. The ecosystem is collapsing and the reverberations will be felt along the entire Pacific coast as the marine environment declines. The fishing industry is in full retreat with economic losses of over \$200 million last year. The problem has grown to even threaten those that drain the water from the Delta.

As our climate changes even greater stress will be placed on the Delta as competition for the water intensifies. Its time to solve the Delta problem, and to do this we need a full and complete understanding of the science of the Delta ecosystem. We need a full understanding of the alternatives to more pumping from the Delta. Those alternatives include everything from reclamation of water in urban centers to enhanced water conservation on the farm, industries and in the cities. We need to make sense out of the Wild West chaos of the underground aquifers. And we need to protect the Delta Island.

The Delta Visioning Process's twin goals of reliable water supply and enhanced Delta environment have great merit, but they can not be achieved in secret, or apart from those who live, recreate and work in the Delta. 500,000 people live in the Delta, creating a vibrant social fabric and a vibrant economy. The legislature and the governor must bring transparency to these long term and critical discussions regarding the Delta. The complex interactions of science, ecological systems, water exports, political constituencies, and the extraordinary expense requires a thorough public vetting of all proposals.

Any discussion of a peripheral canal must follow a solid guarantee that protects the Delta economy and the terrestrial and aquatic environment of the Delta. The battle cry in the 1982 peripheral canal fight was "Policy before Plumbing." To this date no solid lasting public policy is in place to guarantee both goals of the Delta Visioning Commission. Therefore the canal should not be part of any legislation.

The voice of the Delta must be imbedded in any proposal to establish a system of governance in the Delta. The proposal by the five counties that encompass the Delta has great merit and should be in any water legislation."